

# A Story of Compassion

## USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

### SHARE de Guatemala

#### Guatemala

Parents, who often in the past were indifferent or even opposed to their children attending school, showed huge interest and participation in their children's education after the start of SHARE's USDA/FAS school feeding program. They joined Parent-Teacher Committees and Nutrition Boards, which were responsible for organizing and overseeing the transportation, storage and distribution of take home food rations, and the preparation and serving of school meals provided by USDA/FAS. Many of these parents were barely literate and this opportunity was their first to gain valuable life skills.

Teachers enjoyed the improved teaching atmosphere cultivated by the USDA/FAS school-feeding program, i.e. the better equipped classrooms, the more attentive students, and the provision of basic teaching materials. Because parents became more involved in their children's education from simply being at school to prepare and serve food, they tended to demand more of the teachers – not only that they show up to school (which had been a problem) but that they arrive on time and impart a quality education.

Parents and teachers both resoundingly commented that students benefited greatly from the increased attention and concentration in class as a result of the meals and snacks provided by SHARE. They thanked SHARE immensely for the school feeding program brought to them by USDA/FAS' Global Food for Education initiative.

### How the Initiative is Helping

The Faith Based and Community Initiative is working to connect organizations like SHARE de Guatemala to FAS programs like the Global Food for Education Program. Under the program, SHARE was provided 460 tons of corn-soy blend, 40 tons of non-fat dry milk, 210 tons of rice and 60 tons of soybean oil and 20,250 tons of corn by the Foreign Agricultural Service. SHARE used the commodities to feed daily breakfast to 12,000 pre-primary students, provide food scholarships to 1,000 families of secondary school children, provide a daily nutritious snack to 50,000 primary school students and provide community laborers with a "food for work" ration for constructing primary school classrooms.

### About the Organization

SHARE is a grass roots organization working exclusively in Guatemala without aims of profit, without political affiliation, that promotes processes of sustainable development, in support of human groups in vulnerable situations. SHARE contributes to the development of communities, and strengthening of families, young people, and children of Guatemala. SHARE works for a prosperous, equitable and respectful society, where there are opportunities for all without distinction, where nature is protected and where those who have been more favored share their blessings with others.



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SHARE's Global Food for Education Program focused on preschool and school aged children and adolescents in high poverty, rural communities in 22 municipalities in Guatemala. The program was extremely successful in improving attendance and reducing desertion of pre-primary, primary and secondary school age children through the distribution of USDA and locally produced commodities. Attendance rates more than doubled in many schools and the increase in attendance of girls was especially high. Breakfasts, snacks, and food scholarships provided much needed incentive for students to attend school in rural areas where children are needed to help with manual labor at home.



Proceeds from the sale of USDA commodity were also used to improve the educational infrastructure [facilities] for primary schools in extremely depressed regions of the countryside by the exchange of food for work by local laborers. Improvements were made to 12 schools. SHARE was so successful in carrying out the three year 2001 school feeding program in conjunction with World Share that it was awarded a continuation program in FY 2005 by USDA/FAS. SHARE will be receiving a total of 2,760 tons of milk, rice, wheat-soy blend, beans, oil and soybean meal to feed an additional 60,000 pre and primary school children.